

LEA Race to the Top Monitoring Plan

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I. Parties Responsible

The Delivery Unit (DU) will be responsible for monitoring Race to the Top (RTTT) in all participating Local Education Agencies (LEAs), including those within the Partnership Zone.

II. Monitoring Systems

DDOE and LEAs use the state's Education Success Planning and Evaluation System (ESPES) for planning, budgeting grants, and managing projects.

- *RTTT Budgets in ESPES:* All LEAs were required to submit their RTTT budgets through ESPES, outlining the LEAs' salaries, equipment, contracted services and other budgeted expenses for the RTTT grant.
- *RTTT Plans in ESPES:* All LEAs are required to have their RTTT plans entered in ESPES by August 2011. The system will therefore include each LEA's RTTT goals, objectives, strategies, activities, and deliverables (or project milestones).
- *RTTT Measures in ESPES:* The ESPES system will also house LEA-selected performance measures ("Custom Measures"), and DDOE-required performance measures ("Common Measures"). LEAs' progress against their targets for these measures will be used to monitor and assess the performance of LEAs' full programs.

III. Progress and Performance Monitoring Routines

The Delivery Unit will be responsible for two LEA monitoring routines: [Progress Reviews](#) and [Performance Evaluations](#). Changes in the frequency of these routines will be driven by LEA performance and the quality of results found by the DU.

Progress Reviews

The Delivery Unit will conduct a Progress Review with each district at least once per year. The frequency of charter school Progress Reviews will be determined based on the size of the charter's RTTT grant award and the charter's overall performance. The Progress Review process is described below.

A. Before the Progress Review:

1. The LEA will submit a Progress Update reflecting its progress. The Progress Update will consist of the following:
 - a. *Progress Overview Template:* A brief overview with bullets under each of the following categories: A) Major Accomplishments; B) Major Challenges C) Key Actions to Address Challenges and D) Resources and/or Support Needed from DDOE.
 - b. *Updated Progress Monitoring Tool:* An update to the progress monitoring tool (ESPES or an equivalent tool, as approved by DDOE), describing the status of completion of LEA RTTT activities and the quality of implementation.

2. DDOE will review the district's Progress Update and send the LEA discussion questions based on the update. The LEA may be asked to provide additional documentation for its description of activities' status of completion and quality of implementation.

B. During the Progress Review:

1. DDOE and LEA representatives will discuss the Progress Update and related questions, as well as implementation barriers and next steps (see: [Appendix A: Sample LEA Progress Review Agenda](#)).

C. After the Progress Review:

1. DDOE will compile a progress report for Secretary Lowery and the LEA.
 - a. The report will include the LEA's Progress Update and any changes to the update as determined by DDOE based on the Progress Review (e.g., increasing or decreasing the LEA's self-assessment ratings). The report will also include the agreed upon list of next steps and an overall rating of the LEA's progress ("on-track," "somewhat on-track," "somewhat off-track," and "off-track").

Performance Evaluations

The Delivery Unit will conduct Performance Evaluations with each district at least once per year. The frequency of charter school Performance Evaluations will be determined based on the size of the charter's RTTT grant award and the charter's overall performance. The Performance Evaluation process is described below.

A. Before the Performance Evaluation:

1. The LEA will submit a Performance Update reflecting its performance. The Performance Update will consist of the following:
 - a. *Performance Overview Template:* A brief overview with bullets under each of the following categories: A) Major Performance Strengths (based on the data); B) Major Performance Challenges (based on the data); C) Key Actions to Address Performance Challenges and D) Resources and/or Support Needed from DDOE.
 - b. *Updated Performance Monitoring Tool:* An update to the performance monitoring tool (ESPES or an equivalent tool, as approved by DDOE), listing the LEA's performance against its Custom Measures (measures chosen by the LEA through the Race to the Top planning process, for which DDOE does not have the ability to pre-populate LEA data).
2. DDOE will send the LEA its Performance Update for applicable Common Measures (measures required by the state as part of Race to the Top, for which DDOE has the ability to pre-populate LEA data).

B. During the Performance Evaluation:

1. DDOE and LEA representatives will discuss the LEA's Performance Update and related questions, as well as performance barriers and next steps.

C. After the Performance Evaluation:

1. DDOE will compile a brief performance report for Secretary Lowery and the LEA.
 - a. The report will include the LEA's Performance Update. The report will also include the agreed upon list of next steps and an overall rating of the LEA's performance ("on-track," "somewhat on-track," "somewhat off-track," and "off-track").

IV. Technical Assistance

DDOE will provide four types of technical assistance related to Race to the Top.

1. **Re-purposed Chiefs' meetings:** Approximately every other monthly meeting for district Chiefs (or Superintendents) will have a "Professional Learning Community" (PLC) format. In the PLC, LEAs will examine and discuss their data for a specific topic related to Race to the Top (e.g., AP enrollment and success rates, educator hiring and retention).
2. **Dedicated liaisons:** Each LEA will have a dedicated DDOE liaison. Liaisons will participate in RTTT monitoring for their LEAs (e.g., the LEA's Progress Reviews and Performance Evaluations), and will establish additional check-ins based on their LEAs preferences. Liaisons will also participate in regular trainings and feedback sessions at DDOE.
3. **Coordinated initiatives:** DDOE will coordinate a small number of cross-district initiatives based on district interest and need. Examples of this include the statewide PLC training provided in Summer 2011, which was requested by multiple districts.
4. **Online resources:** DDOE will provide online resources focused on examples of effective school improvement within and outside of Delaware, related to the Race to the Top framework.

V. Feedback and Implications

LEAs that do not show satisfactory progress or performance will receive feedback from the DU. The DU will work with LEAs to determine the root causes of progress and/or performance issues. The Delivery Unit, and other offices within DDOE, may provide additional technical assistance to those LEAs. The goal will be to work with any LEA with challenges to move the LEA back on track to success.

Should an LEA have repeated reviews showing that it cannot move its program back on track to success, the DU will meet with members of DDOE's Leadership Team to make a determination about further actions. Such actions may include withholding remaining RTTT funding or not providing future funding.

These Withdrawal of Future Funding decisions will be based on 1) lack of sufficient LEA progress; 2) lack of satisfactory LEA performance; and/or 3) failure to respond to recommendations and/or offers of technical assistance from the Delivery Unit and other DDOE offices.

VI. LEA Plan Amendment Process

The DU has implemented a Plan Amendment process with all LEAs. LEAs may propose revisions to activities, timelines, budget, or annual targets, provided that the following conditions are met:

- Such revisions do not result in the LEA's failure to comply with the terms and conditions of the Race to the Top award and the program's statutory and regulatory provisions;
- The revisions do not change the overall scope and objectives of the approved LEA Plan; and
- The Delaware Department of Education (the Department) and the LEA mutually agree in writing to such revisions. The Department has sole discretion to determine whether to agree to such revisions or modifications.

The full LEA Plan Amendment process is described in [Appendix B](#). Each Amendment Request will be reviewed by the DU to ensure that the requested change will have a positive impact on the LEA's performance measures. Amendment Requests will be brought to the DDOE Leadership Team for review and final approval. The review process may result in a request to the LEA for additional information supporting their rationale for making the change. Decisions for final Approval or Denial reside with the DDOE Leadership Team. Discussions are currently underway to determine a threshold for both budgetary and activity changes that will not need formal Leadership Team approval and can be approved directly by the DU.

VII. Fiscal Oversight of RTTT Funds

Financial Reviews

At least once per year, DDOE will review how each LEA is tracking its Race to the Top expenditures, and determine whether any discrepancies exist between actual expenditures and the approved budget.

- Included in this budget review will be a request for all Time and Effort documentation for any LEA staff directly funded by RTTT grant funds.
- Due to the First State Financial system's design constraints, state financial reports will be limited to LEA expenditure data at the category level, such as personnel, supplies, and contractual expenses. Project level expense tracking is not available within FSF. LEAs will be responsible for tracking their expenditures at the activity (project) level, which will be subject to annual review.

Additional Fiscal Oversight Information

1. Tracking of RTTT Funds

- a. The state, school districts and charter schools all administer funds using a unified accounting system. Effective Fiscal Year 2011, Delaware implemented its new accounting system, First State Financials.
- b. A resulting benefit to this is that all cash management functions are performed centrally by the DDOE. As part of this, the State has put in place ongoing procedures to monitor cash balances and to minimize the time lapsing between the transfer and disbursement of funds. The cash management agreement can be found here: http://budget.delaware.gov/documents/tsa_fy2011.pdf. These procedures also ensure that each sub recipient has an adequate financial recordkeeping system to properly account for the use of RTTT funds.

- c. All RTTT funds have been given a separate and uniform project tracking code to allow for seamless tracking. Each sub-grant issued to an LEA will have a unique project code to facilitate transparency among activities.
 - d. DDOE Finance will monitor expenditures, encumbrances and balances of RTTT funds on a quarterly basis and provide the Delivery Unit with summary reports.
2. **Yearly Annual Financial Report** – All school districts and charter schools must file an annual report to the DDOE. DDOE will review each LEA annual report to ensure expenditure data reported is consistent with approved plan budgets.
3. **Local Audits** – Each RTTT recipient must have a local audit, which may include participation in the State’s A-133 Single Audit. Audit findings are provided to these LEAs each spring by the Auditor’s office. DDOE will review these local audits for irregularities or noncompliance.
4. **1512 Reporting** – Delaware has chosen to implement 1512 reporting using a decentralized methodology for state agencies, including LEAs. As part of this, school districts and charters have been designated as sub-recipients for purposes of RTTT reporting and have been delegated the responsibility to report their 1512 information directly into federalreporting.gov. DE OMB has been designated the lead agency for 1512 compliance monitoring. Comprehensive guidance to both prime and sub recipients is located on the OMB website at <http://www.omb.delaware.gov/arra/index.shtml>. DDOE and OMB receive copies of LEAs sub recipient reports after entering into federalreporting.gov and OMB extensively uses the “DUNS Extract” capabilities of the federalreporting.gov system to cross check sub recipient info. OMB reviews each sub recipient report for data quality and provides feedback when issues are noted. 1512 information provides a regular source of data for purposes of monitoring RTTT funds.

VIII. Coordination with the School Turnaround Unit (STU) and Title I Office

The School Turnaround Unit (STU) has a direct and integrated oversight and monitoring program for all schools within the Partnership Zone (PZ). The Delivery Unit will work in partnership with the STU to integrate the PZ monitoring program with that of the DU. The STU team members will be included in DU Program Review meetings for LEAs with PZ schools. Each Partnership Zone school, upon being identified as such, entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the LEA to determine the model to be implemented of the four allowable restructuring options under the School Improvement Grant (Title 1003(g)).

For those Partnership Zone schools that do not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) after two years of operation, state regulation requires a new MOU be developed and agreed upon between the school and its LEA. The school will again have the opportunity to pursue further reform, secure additional flexibilities in staffing and operations, and, if necessary, narrow the set of restructuring to exclude the failed option.

The School Turnaround Unit (STU) and Title I Office will be responsible for monitoring performance in all LEAs and schools receiving Title 1003(g) School Improvement Grant funds, including Tier III schools funded through the SIG grant. The DU will work in partnership with the Turnaround Unit and the Title I Office to coordinate review work and LEA review meetings.

The Turnaround Unit and Title I Office will monitor schools receiving SIG funds to ensure they are making significant progress and are on track to achieve AYP in the following ways:

- Monitoring LEA progress updates for formative measures under the LEA Success Plan SIG Goal(s) and ensuring progress is being made (at least annually).
- Monitoring LEA progress updates for summative measures under the SIG Goal(s) to ensure student achievement targets are being met (at least annually).
- Monitoring LEA progress on SIG project management plans (at least annually).
- Monitoring LEA expenditures (at least annually).

IX. Appendices

Appendix A: Sample LEA Progress Review Agenda

1. 1:00-2:30 - Discuss Progress Update and DDOE Discussion Questions
 - a. Major LEA accomplishments, challenges and key actions to address them
 - b. Activities rated "Somewhat off-track" or "Off-track" in terms of the status of completion; activities rated "Somewhat weak" or "Weak" in terms of the quality of implementation
 - c. Activities that represent the LEA's priorities and/or greatest investments
 - d. Activities of high priority to DDOE
2. 2:30-3:30 – Discuss Implementation Barriers
 - a. How can we address the identified challenges?
 - b. How can we move "somewhat off-track" or "off-track" activities back on-track, and improve the quality of implementation for "somewhat weak" or "weak" activities?
 - c. How can we enhance implementation of activities that represent the LEA's priorities and/or greatest investments, and activities of high priority to DDOE?
 - d. What resources and/or support can DDOE provide to support LEA success?
3. 3:30-4:00 - Determine joint next steps
 - a. For DDOE
 - b. For the LEA

Appendix B: Race to the Top LEA Subgrant Amendment Submission Process

An LEA subgrantee (LEA) may request a revision to its approved Race to the Top grant project. As previously discussed, LEAs may propose revisions to goals, activities, timelines, budget, or annual targets, provided that the following conditions are met:

- Such revisions do not result in the LEA's failure to comply with the terms and conditions of this award and the program's statutory and regulatory provisions;
- The revisions do not change the overall scope and objectives of the approved proposal; and
- The Delaware Department of Education (the Department) and the LEA mutually agree in writing to such revisions. The Department has sole discretion to determine whether to agree to such revisions or modifications.

This document provides guidelines for LEAs requesting to amend the grant project. Specifically it includes:

- Circumstances requiring submission of an amendment request
- What to include in an amendment request
- When and how to submit an amendment request
- The Department's review process

Circumstances requiring submission of an amendment request:

- **Changes in activities.** An LEA must request an amendment for any proposed revision that constitutes a substantial change in activities from the approved grant project, regardless of budgetary impacts. The Delivery Unit can help you determine whether the change is a substantial change in activities. Such changes may include, but are not limited to, changes in goals, activities, timelines, annual targets, or performance measures.
- **Major budgetary changes.** Budgetary changes include transfers among direct cost categories (e.g., personnel, travel, equipment) and among separately budgeted programs, projects, function, or activities that exceed a certain threshold of the current approved budget. In such cases, an LEA must request an amendment to its budget. *(This budgetary threshold is still being determined)*
- **Decision to withdrawal from RTTT Grant.** An LEA determines it wishes to withdrawal from the RTTT funding grant. Note that an LEA may choose to withdraw from the State's Race to the Top grant project, as long as the terms of the withdrawal are consistent with the termination terms in the MOU signed between the State and the LEA and, if applicable, with the scope of work.

What to include in the amendment request:

Consider using the letter template provided by the Department to provide information regarding the following five elements:

1. Grant project area(s) that would be affected by the change.

2. Description of the requested change. Include a *brief* explanation of the original work/activities/budget and a more detailed description of the new work/activities/budget being requested.

3. Impact statement regarding performance metrics/outcomes. Explain how this change would affect the LEA's performance measures and student outcome goals, and how the requested change helps the LEA meet its goals.

4. Budget documentation. Include the most recent relevant project-level budget table(s), and indicate with “track changes” the requested changes. The Department’s Delivery Unit may request additional supplementary information, as needed. If the requested amendment does not affect the budget, indicate that in the request.

5. Signatures. The payee (e.g., LEA Chief or representative) must sign the request and provide an assurance that the subgrantee (Superintendent) is aware of the request. If the request is for a substantial change, the Department may require a signature from the Superintendent, as well as the payee.

When and how to submit an amendment request:

- Amendment requests must be submitted prior to implementing any changes to grant projects or budgets.
- Amendment requests can be submitted to the Department at any time.
- All requests should be submitted to the Delivery Unit.

The Department’s review process:

- Amendment Requests will be brought to the DOE Leadership Team by the Delivery Unit for review and final approval. The review process may result in a request to the LEA for additional information supporting their argument for making the change(s). Decisions for final Approval or Denial reside with the Leadership Team. Discussions are currently underway to determine a threshold for both budgetary and activity changes that will not need formal Leadership Team approval and can be approved directly by the DU.

The Department will make every effort to review and make a determination on submitted amendment requests within 10 business days. In cases where a decision cannot be made without more information or clarification from the LEA, decision timeframes will be adjusted on a case-by-case basis.